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STATINTL

The Making of Policy

How the Proposals on Berlin Worked Their Way Through to a Policy

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 5—As is well known, it is impossible to come by reliable information on marriage. Those who aren't married don't know; those who are won't tell. The same can be said of that other great arcanum, the making of foreign policy.

Those who have never participated in that mysterious State Department rite called "a meeting" and have never been privy to much-initialled position papers cannot possibly understand what goes into the making of policy. And those who have been so privileged are bound by secrecy—or perhaps restrained by modesty—from disclosing the process.

Despite the futility of the search, the questions—who is the President listening to, who proposed this and who opposed that—continue to intrigue, and nowhere so much as in this self-absorbed capital where they are matter for dinner gossip and newspaper speculation. And right now, of course, the questions are directed at policy on Berlin.

If it is impossible to trace in detail how the President's reply to Khrushchev's June 4 aide memoire was assembled—which minds left the heaviest marks on it—it is possible to learn something of the machinery and dramatis personae.

Two things should be noted at the outset. First, Berlin was hardly a tabula erasa. The problem has been around, in more or less acute stages, for thirteen years. Position papers, proposals and studies, if laid end to end, would stretch from the Potomac to the Oder-Neisse line.

Second, the administration learned a lesson from the ill-fated Cuban invasion, and the Berlin policy which the President announced two weeks ago, it is agreed, was really "staffed out." Which means that the policy-making was orderly, thorough and considered.

The policy planning on Berlin—that is, the formulation of proposals for submission to the President—took place on three levels. In addition, ideas were fed in at various levels by special advisers.

Advisory Groups

The first level was a so-called "steering committee" made up of Secretary of State Dean Rusk as chairman, Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense, McGeorge Bundy, the President's special assistant on national security affairs, and Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The second level, sometimes referred to as "the coordinating group," was headed by Foy D. Kohler, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, who has been relieved of other duties to concentrate on Berlin policy.

The third, or "slogging," level was a group headed by Martin J. Hillenbrand, director of the Office of German Affairs.

Also heavily involved were U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs; Charles E. Bohlen, special assistant to the secretary for Soviet Affairs and a former Ambassador to Moscow; George C. McGhee and Henry Owen, chairman and member of the policy planning council; Abram Chayes, State Department legal adviser; Dean Acheson, former Secretary of State, and Henry [illegible] consultant.

It should be noted, however, that the contributions of Mr. Acheson and Mr. Kissinger were kept within channels.

In an article for this newspaper Dean Acheson wrote:

"Popular conceptions about government are in large part interesting folklore; and the instinct of the bureaucracy for self-preservation and the egotism of the chiefs (of departments) perpetuate it. One of these concepts is that 'policy' originates at the top and is passed down.

"To be sure, *great decisions* are, for the most part, made at the top, when they are not made by events. But as for policy—the sum total of many decisions—it must be said, as it has been said of sovereignty, that its real sources are undiscoverable. One fact, however, is clear to anyone with experience in government: the springs of policy bubble up, they do not trickle down."

Rusk's Conclusions

So apparently, it has largely been with the Berlin policy. Mr. Kohler and Mr. Hillenbrand, who have lived a long time with the Berlin problem, have carried the lion's share of the work, staying up nights to write the papers that were passed on up to Mr. Rusk.

When, out of all this activity, Mr. Rusk had made his own conclusions, he took them to the President.

There has been an attempt here, as always happens with such crucial policy questions, to divide the President's advisers into "hard" and "soft." Thus there was supposed to have been a "to-hell-with-Khrushchev" school bent on driving through to Berlin at the first sign of trouble with the East Germans at the check points and a "less-monstrous monster" school which argued that Khrushchev might be bad but he was the best of the lot and we should help him sustain his coexistence pitch by concessions.

Actually this is a vast oversimplification. There seems to have been general agreement on the basic elements of the policy from the outset. These were that the West could not yield to Khrushchev's blackmail; that it must make credible its determination to stay in Berlin by measures of military preparedness, and that the door must be left open for cooling talks even if there was no prospect for a negotiated settlement.

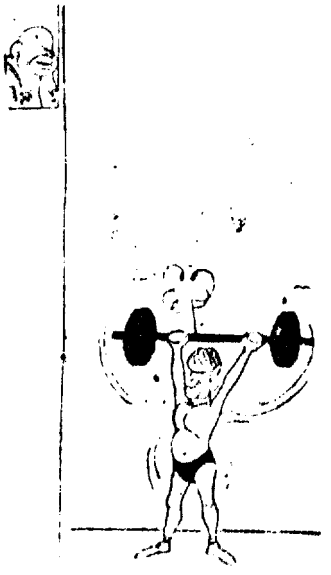
The differences that had to be thrashed out, then, seem to have been largely the extent of the military measures, whether to give United States purpose [illegible] peace, and the weight of the [illegible] talk

Final Stage

There was, of course, one final step in the policy-making process—the President's speech to the nation and the world the day after the note to Moscow. Here Theodore C. Sorenson, the President's special counsel, was called in.

"No one down the line," Mr. Acheson has written, "can control the White House composers gathered around the cabinet table, with the draft of a foreign policy speech before them and the bit in their teeth." Since, Mr. Acheson says out of bitter experience, "this is often, where policy is made, regardless of where it is supposed to be made," it behooves the Secretary of State to join the fray.

Mr. Rusk went over the speech with great care.



Kennedy shows his strength as Khrushchev looks on